

643 Dr. Steele, one of the early medical missionaries in northern Ngoni-
 766 land, was present at the burial of Mbelwa I and left an account of it
 184 which is quoted by Dr. Elmalie.¹ He spoke of the great crowds of men
 coming to mourn armed with spears and shields, and some with guns.
 They came in companies, as if they were the military bands coming for
 mobilization from the head villages. They marched first with their
 shields held high over their heads, and then laid them down and clasped
 their hands behind their heads, advancing towards and retreating from
 the grave and keeping up a continuous mourning cry of 'Baba be'. Three
 days elapsed between the death and the burial. During that time two
 graves were dug, in order that all the Paramount's possessions might be
 buried with him or beside him. When the graves were ready, the kraal
 was cleared of all but the married men who had the head-ring. Mean-
 time the wives of the Paramount, carrying his shields, were advancing
 towards the grave and retreating, a few steps at a time. They finally went
 back to their houses, dressed themselves in skins, and returned in single
 file on their hands and knees. They withdrew as the corpse was brought
 out and placed in the grave, and other women came with the Paramount's
 possessions, such as pipes, wooden head-rests and shields, and all were
 put into the graves. The men stood in circles round the graves with their
 shields over their heads.

Among the central Ngoni Rattray recorded an account of the funeral
 rites of Cikusi in 1891, which I was able to check with more than one
 old man who had been present. There was also the funeral of Bambo
 Manga which I witnessed in 1937, where the ritual followed was
 identical with that described by the old men for the Paramount Cikusi,
 with one exception: that her possessions but not her body were cremated
 by a stream.

[644] The chief differences between the northern and central Ngoni in the
 [786] funeral rites at the death of the Paramount were that the central Ngoni
 Paramounts of the Maseko clan were cremated and not buried, and
 there was no public mourning, but instead a series of war-dances. There
 were two other distinctive features among the central Ngoni: formerly
 the individual known as the 'royal shadow' died with the Paramount;
 and from the time of the actual death to the time of the cremation there
 was a period of licence and lawlessness called *ciponde*. This latter
 phenomenon may have existed among the northern Ngoni, but I did not
 ask about it specifically when I was there, and I did not hear it
 referred to. I was made aware of it forcibly at the death of Bambo Manga
 when my cook and houseboy immediately dumped all their possessions
 in my hut as the only safe place during the time of *ciponde*. Rattray's
 account of the death of Cikusi also mentioned this practice.

In the traditions of the central Ngoni it was recorded that only the
 Maseko Paramounts in the direct line were cremated, and not the

¹ Elmalie, W. A. op. cit. p. 270.